

Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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Soviet Naval Activity Outside Home Waters During 1984

Summary

NGA, NAVY Reviews Completed

Soviet naval presence outside home waters traditionally has involved only a fraction of the Soviet Navy and this remains true today. It has been steadily increasing, however, and in 1984 reached its highest level ever.

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In addition, the transformation of Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam into a true overseas base for the Soviet Navy is a major change from the transitory and small-scale use of overseas facilities that has been characteristic of Soviet naval operations outside home waters. The buildup of air strength at Cam Ranh into a regimental-size composite air unit--with strike, fighter, reconnaissance, ASW, and support aircraft--has dramatically increased the presence of Soviet naval aviation deployed outside the USSR. An increased number of surface combatants and general purpose submarines at Cam Ranh form the core of a naval squadron. The Soviets also are continuing to renovate and construct support facilities there, permitting expanded services for air and naval units and probably easing the burden placed on their auxiliary ships.

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Soviet naval presence has become more robust in several regions:

- It increased sharply in the open Pacific Ocean, with nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines, general purpose submarines, and hydrographic and space event support ships accounting for most of the increase.

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This memorandum was prepared by _____ the Office of Soviet Analysis. Comments and queries are welcome and may be addressed to the author _____ or to Chief, Strategic Forces Division, _____

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- Two naval task groups visited Cuba in 1984, including the first visit by a Moskva-class helicopter carrier.
- A three-year decline in the size of the Indian Ocean Squadron ended in 1984 with an increase in the average number of general purpose submarines and surface combatants deployed there. [redacted]

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In the open Atlantic and along West Africa the Soviet naval presence has remained about the same, and only in the Mediterranean did the level of surface and subsurface units decline somewhat. Even there, deployment of IL-38 ASW aircraft to Libya and Syria occurred more often in 1984. [redacted]

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Peacetime missions of Soviet naval forces deployed out-of-area continue to range from showing-the-flag in Third World ports to monitoring Western naval forces. As the out-of-area forces become more numerous, their potential value in support of wartime missions of the Soviet Navy is increasing. This is particularly true of the expanded force and support present in the South China Sea. They could divert, delay, and perhaps even destroy some US and allied forces that could instead be engaging the bulk of the Soviet Navy, its bases, and its higher value units in more critical combat theaters. [redacted]

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General Pattern of Soviet Naval Deployments

1. The Soviet naval presence outside home waters in 1984 increased two percent over that of 1983, to nearly 62,000 ship-days spent out of area, the most ever. (We use the yearly tabulation of ship-days--the presence of one ship away from home waters for one day--to compare deployment levels with those of preceding years and to identify changes in deployment patterns.) Ship-days in the open Pacific registered a sharp increase--36%. Ship-days increased slightly in the Atlantic Ocean, South China Sea, and Indian Ocean and remained stable off West Africa while they declined in the Mediterranean Sea. Two task groups--instead of the usual one--visited Cuba and operated in the Caribbean in 1984. [redacted]

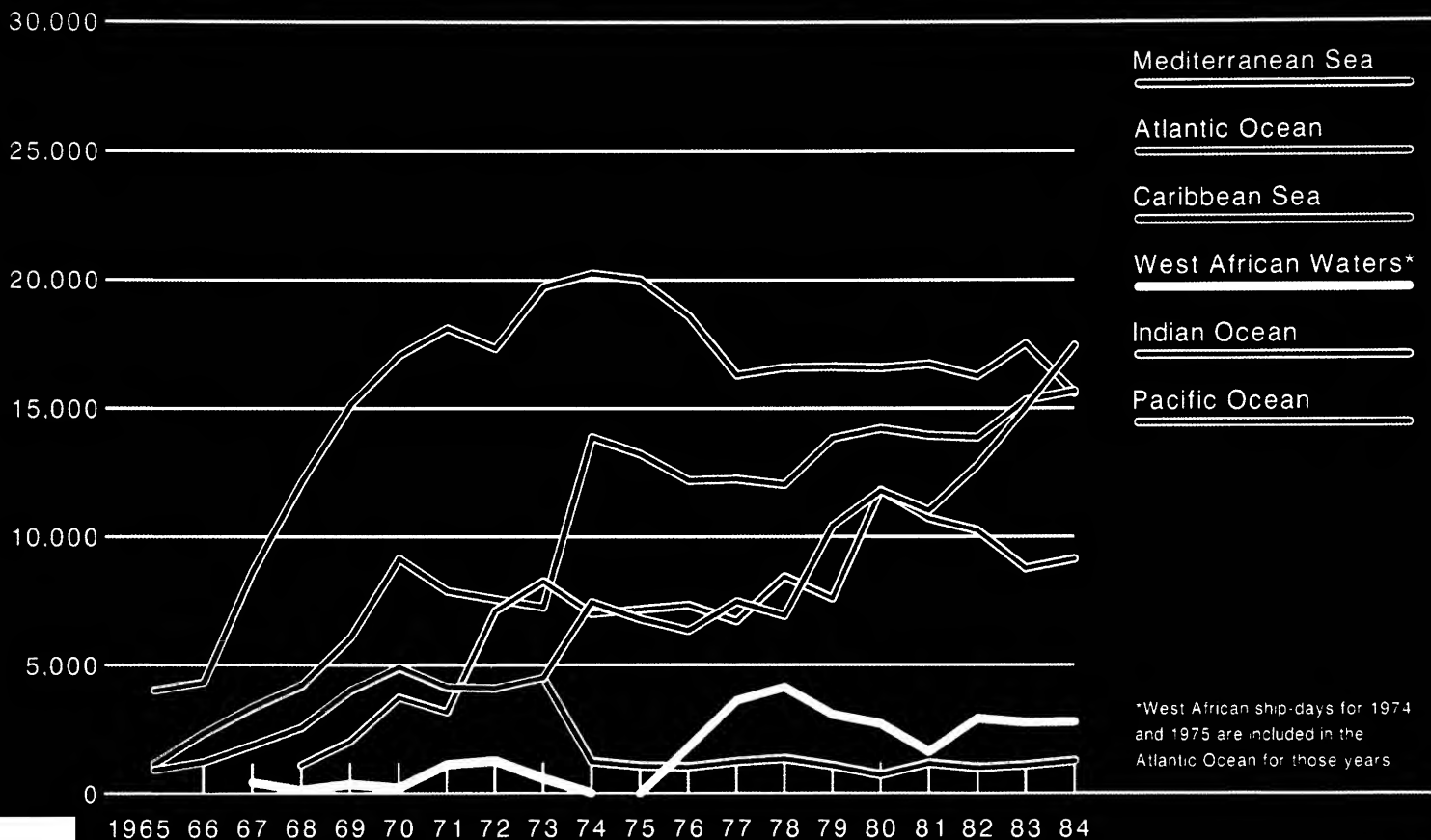
Soviet Naval Aviation

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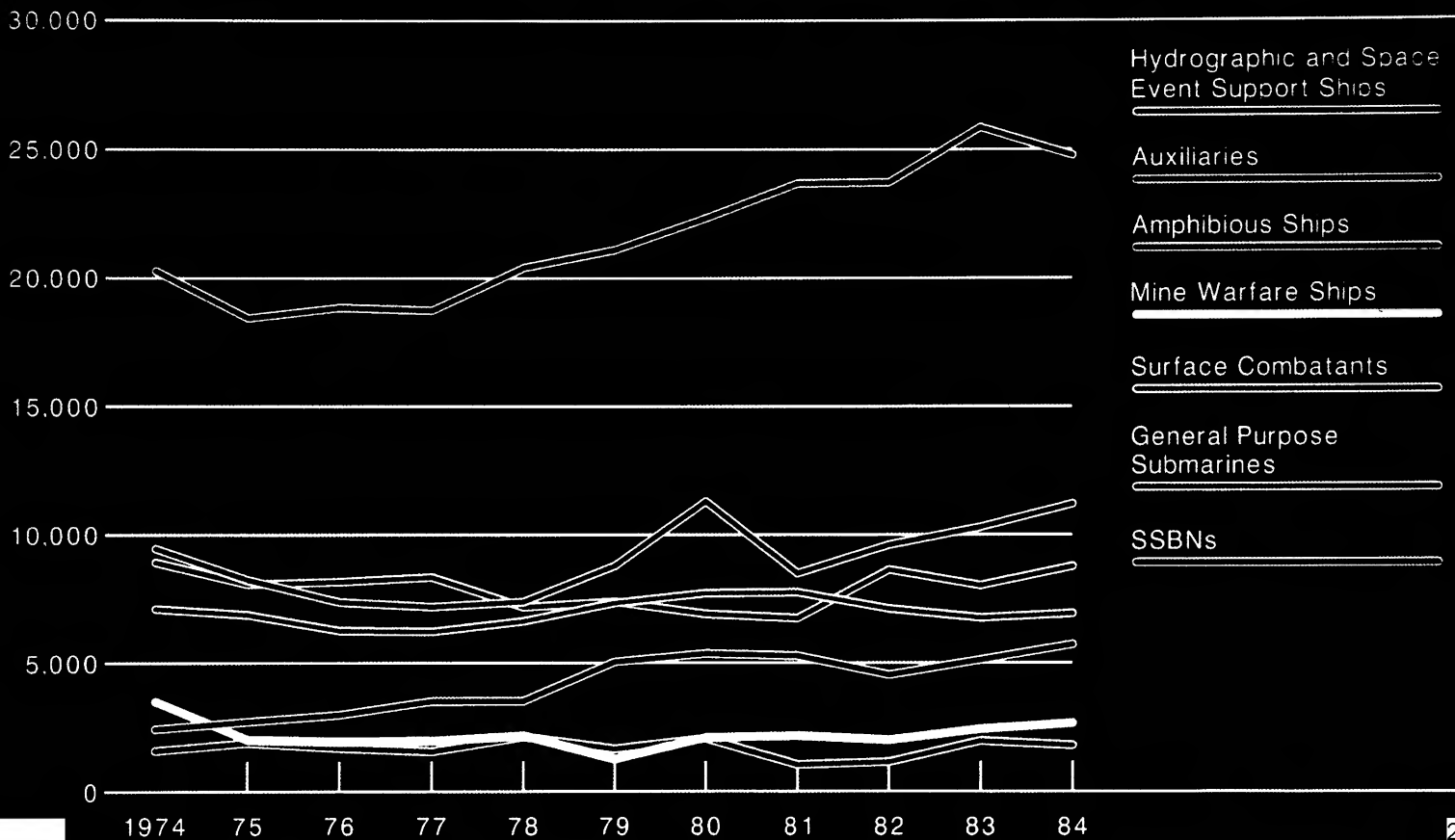
2. Soviet Naval Aviation (SNA) aircraft deployments to airfields outside the USSR rose dramatically in 1984--more than doubling--due to the build-up of a composite naval air regiment at Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam and the institution of

[redacted]
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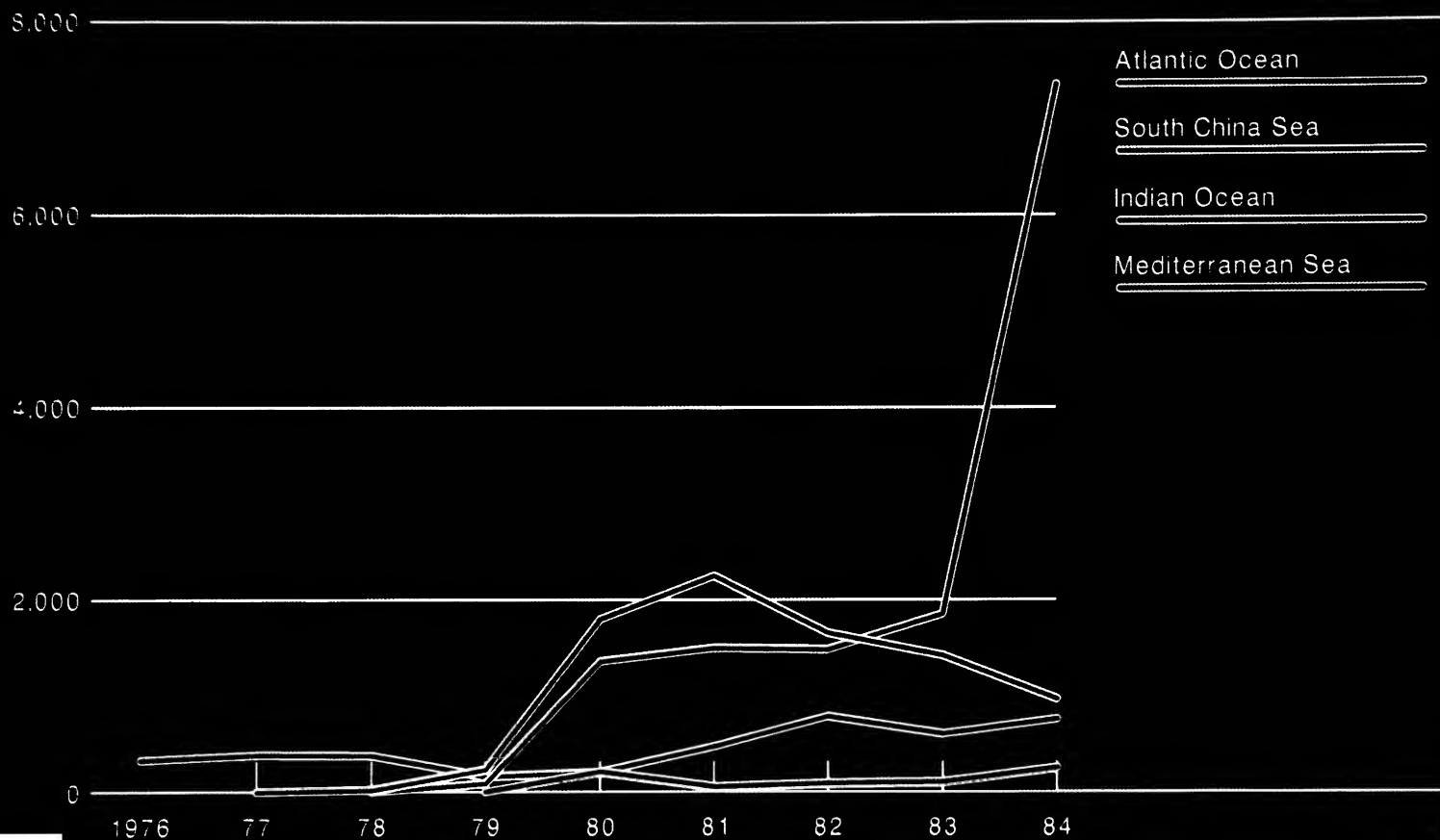
Soviet Ship-Days in Distant Waters, by Region, 1965 - 1984



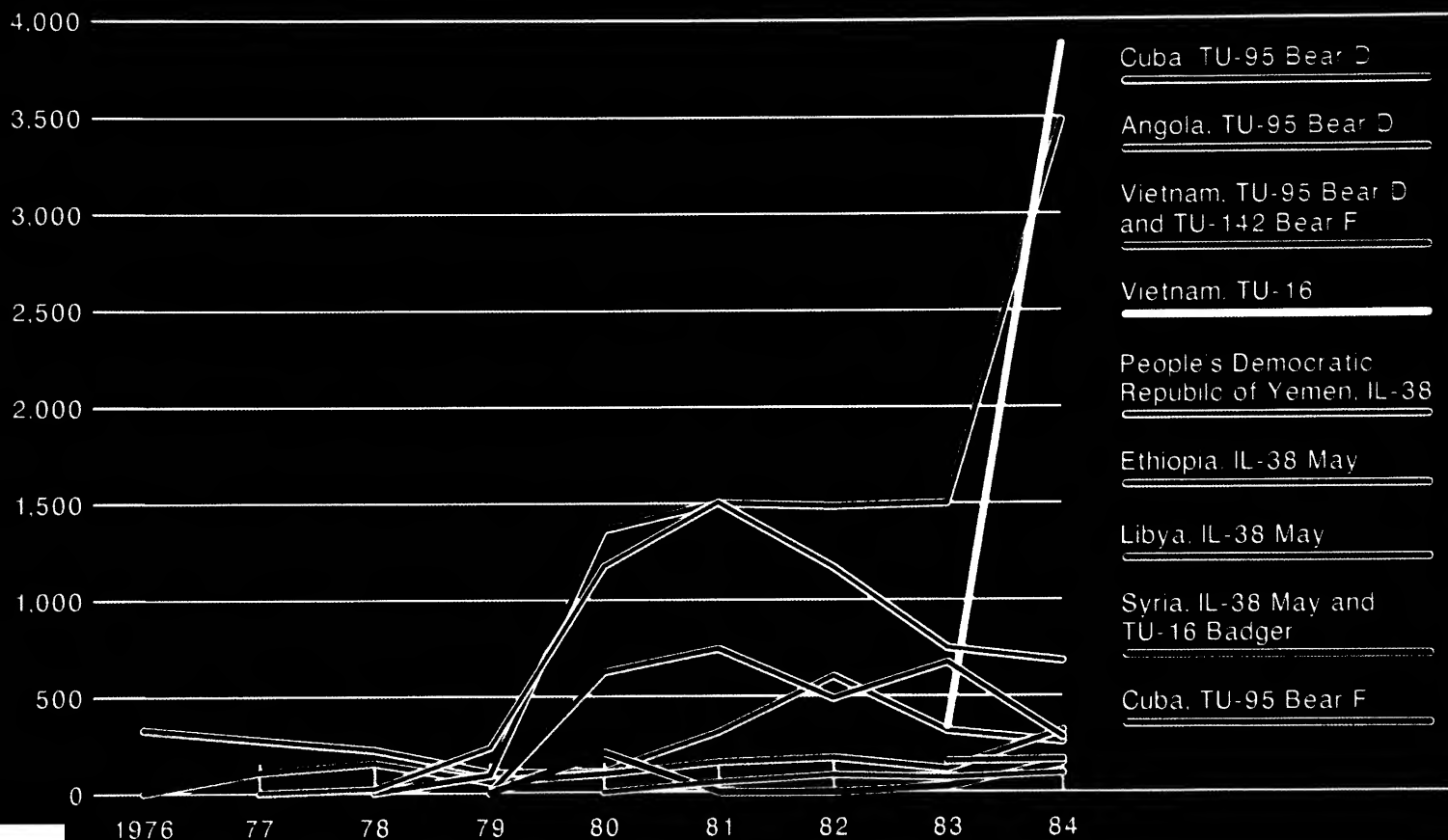
Soviet Ship-Days in Distant Waters, by Type, 1974 - 1984



Total Naval Aviation Out of Area Deployment Days 1976 - 1984



Overseas Deployment of Soviet Naval Aviation 1976 - 1984



more frequent IL-38 ASW aircraft deployments to Libya and Syria. Deployment days for Soviet naval aircraft in the Indian Ocean dropped significantly in 1984. Aircraft days decreased slightly in Cuba, but increased in Angola.

[REDACTED]

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3. In recent years, the Soviets have demonstrated a more sustained, active, and proficient use of naval aircraft in distant areas. In 1984, the presence of naval aircraft in Vietnam--as measured in days of aircraft presence--surpassed the previous peak established in Egypt in the early 1970s. The Soviets continue to diversify the air order-of-battle at Cam Ranh, adding fighters, bombers, and various support aircraft as they gradually increase the inventory. [REDACTED]

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4. Growth of naval aviation deployments occurred on a smaller scale in the Mediterranean region in 1984. There was an increase in the number of IL-38 deployments to both Libya and Syria. The deployments have become more diversified in 1985 with a combination of IL-38 deployments to Libya and TU-16 Badger reconnaissance aircraft staging to Syria. This marked the first visits of Badgers to the region since a single previous visit to Syria in 1981 and the routine presence of these aircraft in Egypt in the 1970s. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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6. The increased presence and activity probably have contributed to a rise in proficiency. Although losses of SNA aircraft still occasionally occur overseas, Soviet units continue to expand gradually their operational areas in most regions where they deploy. This evolution probably will continue as the Soviets experiment with the use of naval aviation in a variety of missions in distant areas. [REDACTED]

Regional Presence and Activities

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South China Sea

7. During 1984, the Soviets built their forces in the South China Sea into a naval squadron while they renovated or constructed new shore facilities in Vietnam. The level of surface combatants nearly doubled during the year, although the total number of ship days in the region increased by only two

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Measuring Soviet Naval Presence

Ship days are the most convenient measure of Soviet naval presence outside home waters, but they can be misleading unless several considerations are taken into account:

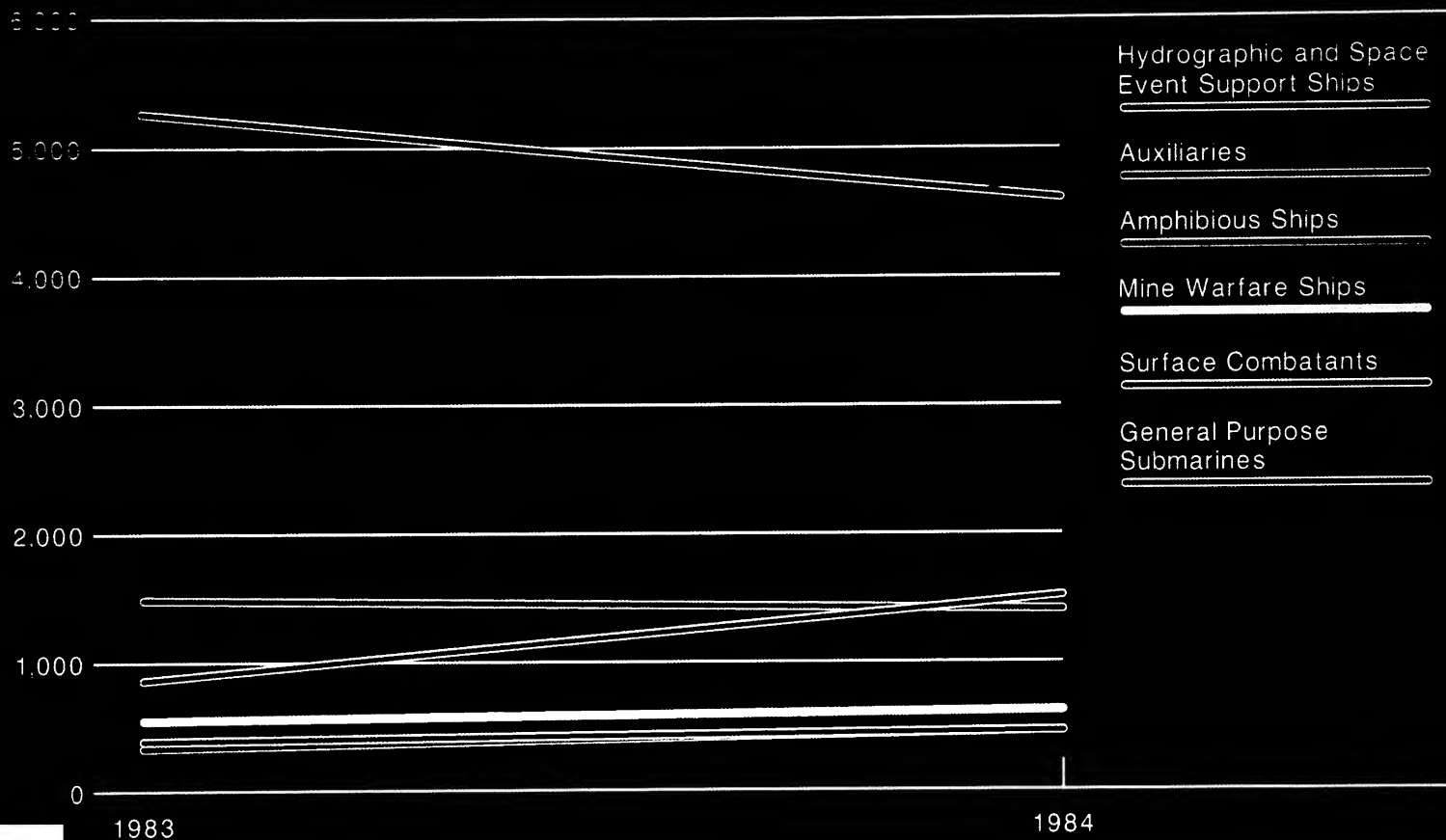
- Yearly statistics include the large percentage of noncombat ships that the Soviets maintain abroad. Many naval auxiliaries, such as yard craft, repair ships, and submarine tenders are included in the ship-day count. In 1984, nearly 40 percent of Soviet ship days represented such auxiliary ships and craft. Another 14 percent are accounted for by research vessels and missile testing and space support ships.
 - Our figures do not differentiate between days at sea and those spent in foreign ports or sheltered anchorages.
 - Ships in transit for sea trials or interfleet transfer are counted, although they may perform only limited operational functions or none at all.
 - The Soviet Navy must commit ships to maintenance before, after, and sometimes during overseas deployments to maintain out-of-area force levels. Thus the ship-day count does not reflect the total time involved in supporting distant naval operations.
 - Soviet out-of-area deployments attract significant attention, yet on a daily average they involve under 10 percent of the Soviet Navy. In 1984 the Navy deployed on a daily average 19 surface combatants and about 31 general purpose submarines--only about 6 percent of the combatant inventory and about 10 percent of the general purpose submarines.
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Soviet Ship-Days in the South China Sea (Without the Pacific Ocean), 1983 - 1984



percent, in part because the availability of shore-based support permitted a 13 percent reduction in auxiliary ship days. In addition, the buildup occurred late in the year and is not reflected adequately by the yearly totals. [redacted]

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8. The squadron now usually includes four to six submarines. Typically, about three or four are based at Cam Ranh and one or two are there during transit to or from the Indian Ocean. Four small ASW ships, two missile-equipped patrol combatants, two coastal minesweepers, and a number of auxiliaries usually are present in the South China Sea, as well as one or two frigates during transit to or from the Indian Ocean. The three to four submarines, small combatants, ASW ships, and the coastal minesweepers form the core of what appears to be a permanently deployed squadron formation. [redacted]

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9. The Soviets continue to renovate the port facilities at Cam Ranh, upgrading POL storage and water pumping facilities. [redacted] new construction--barracks, storage and other buildings--at a number of locations on Cam Ranh peninsula in support of both the airfield and the port. [redacted]

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10. The Soviets appear to have formed at Cam Ranh a composite air regiment composed of two to four Bear F ASW aircraft, two to four Bear D reconnaissance aircraft, 16 Badger bombers and support aircraft, and 14 Flogger fighters. Renovation and new construction at the airfield is continuing. The Soviets have established minor maintenance facilities, weapons storage, and more housing, and have refurbished POL pipelines and storage tanks. [redacted]

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11. The Soviets have improved the overall defense of Cam Ranh with missile-equipped naval combatants and Flogger aircraft, and more additions may occur. The deployment of mobile surface-to-surface coastal defense missiles would be a logical next step; coastal defense missiles defend the homewaters of all four Soviet fleets and have been exported to a number of countries. [redacted]

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12. Soviet auxiliaries continued to undergo extended repair and overhaul in Ho Chi Minh City, while minor maintenance and repair activities provided by afloat auxiliaries continued in Cam Ranh Bay. Soviet use of Singapore for refuelling naval-subordinated oilers supporting the South China Sea squadron increased in 1984--four used Singapore in 1984 compared to two in 1983. [redacted]

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13. The naval base at Cam Ranh Bay contrasts with the traditional impermanence of Soviet out-of-area presence since their expulsions from Egypt and Somalia. Soviet air and naval facilities at Cam Ranh continue to grow and take on the appearance of permanence; most air and naval units routinely

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present appear to be deployed either permanently or until repair and overhaul needs require rotation back to the USSR. [REDACTED]

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14. The expansion of forces at Cam Ranh reduces--at least initially--the strength of the Pacific Fleet available to carry out the primary mission of defending the critical sea approaches to the USSR. The forces at Cam Ranh potentially could aid this mission in an indirect manner, however, through operations in the South China Sea region. If units stand and fight at Cam Ranh during war with the West--as implied by the diversification and permanence of the facilities and forces there--they could delay, divert, or damage US naval forces ultimately needed for higher priority missions. [REDACTED]

Pacific Ocean

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15. Soviet out-of-area ship days in the open Pacific increased 36 percent. The major increase was in submarine days. The increased submarine days reflect more numerous patrols of SSBNs and some general purpose units off the US West Coast, as well as increased numbers of general purpose submarines transiting to and from the South China Sea and Indian Ocean. [REDACTED]

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16. The more frequent SSBN patrols close to the US west coast include unprecedented and nearly-continuous forward deployments of Delta-class SSBNs away from traditional patrol areas close to the USSR. The Soviets have also increased the frequency of their Y-class deployments off the US west coast. [REDACTED]

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Indian Ocean

17. A three-year decline in the size of the Indian Ocean Squadron ended in 1984 when the force there increased slightly. Two general purpose submarines were usually present in 1984, up one from 1983, and three surface combatants were usually there instead of two to three. Research ships spent about 25% more time in the region, while the presence of a mine warfare ship and one or two amphibious ships remained stable. Auxiliary ship presence declined 10 percent to 12-13 vessels on the average. [REDACTED]

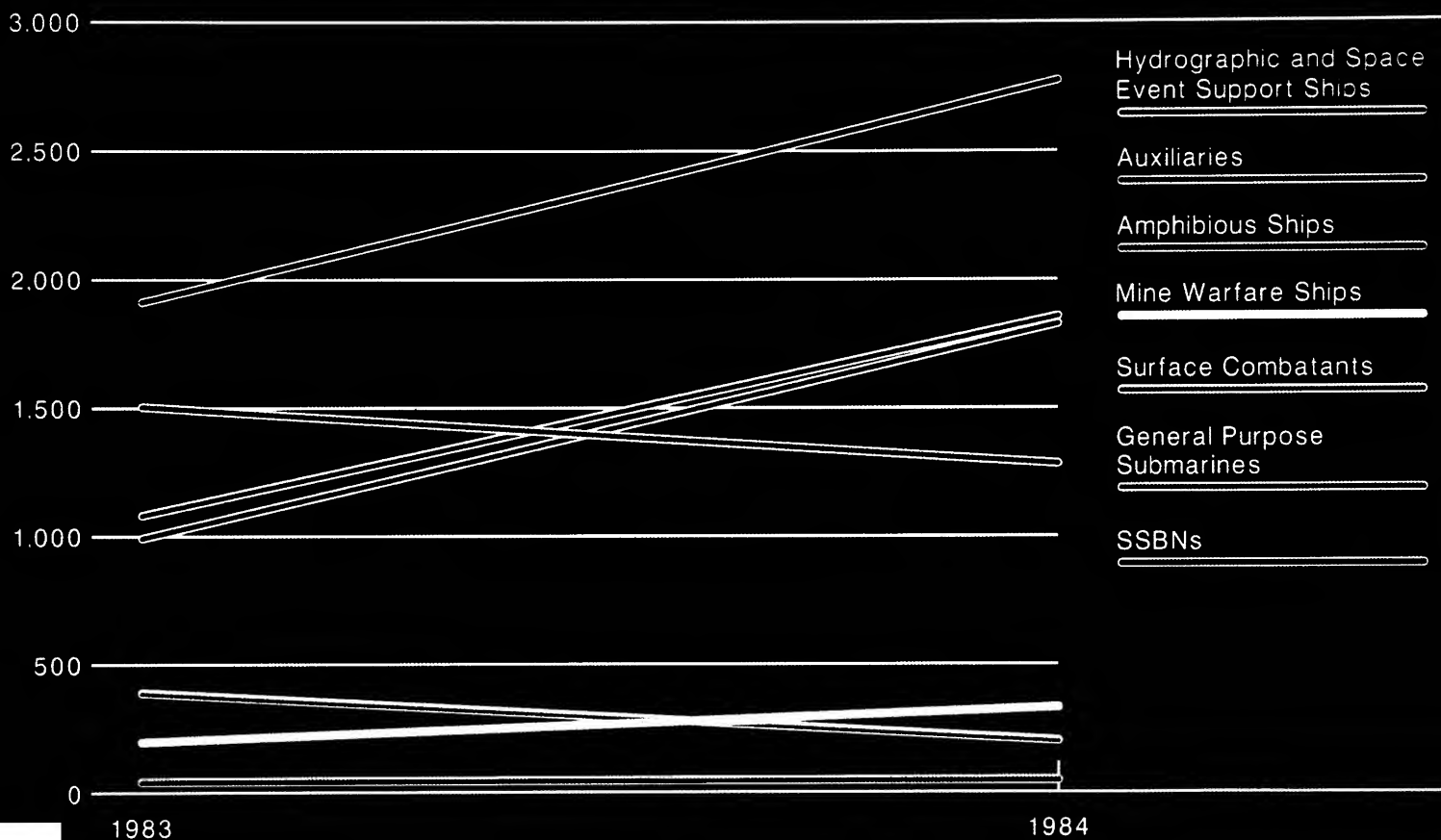
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18. The squadron's units continue to spend most of their time at anchor at the austere Soviet naval support facility at Ethiopia's Dahlak Island in the Red Sea or in South Yemeni waters, either in Aden harbor or at the anchorages off Socotra Island. Port calls are made to littoral states, particularly to the Seychelles in support of the Rene regime. [REDACTED]

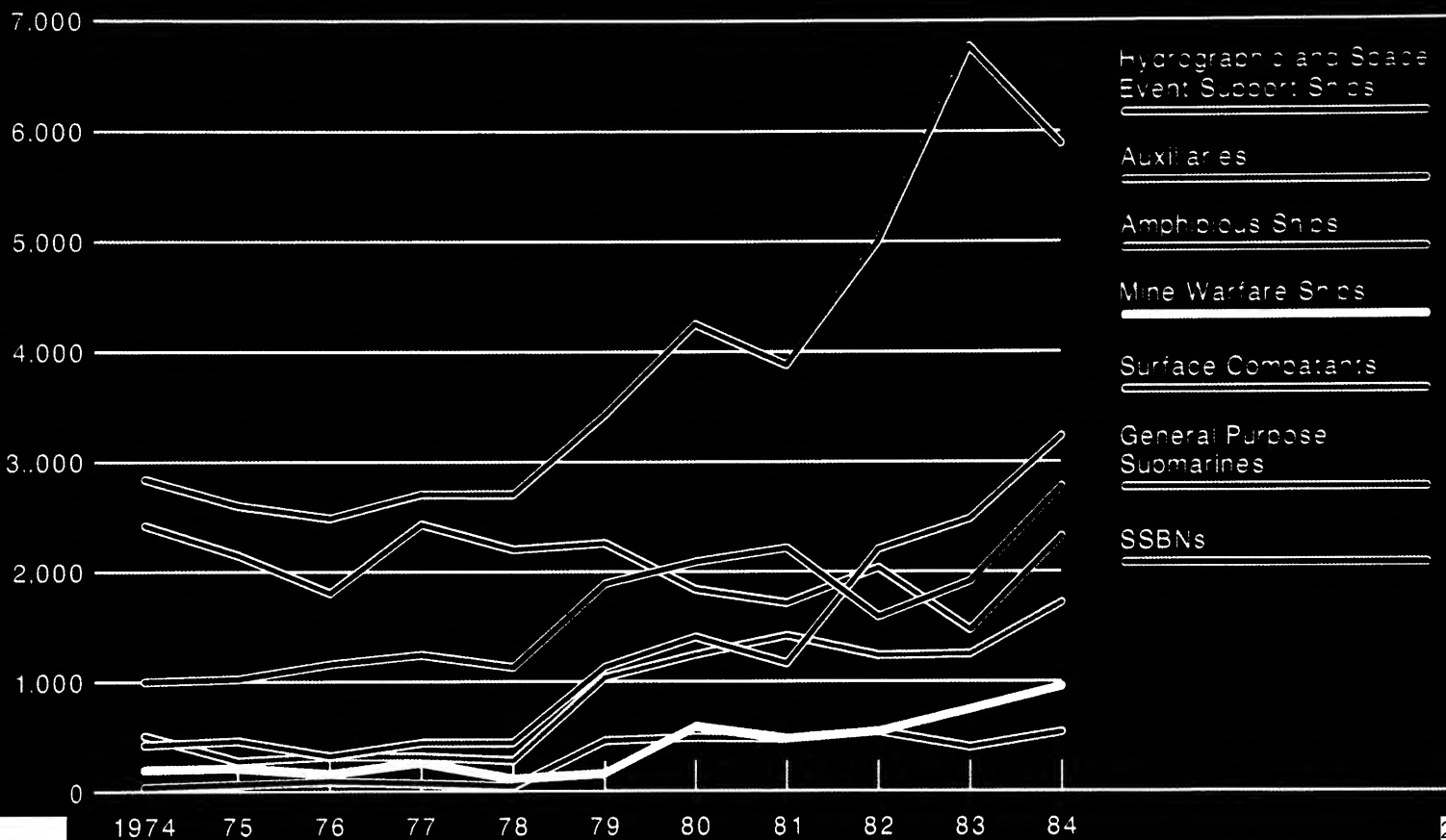
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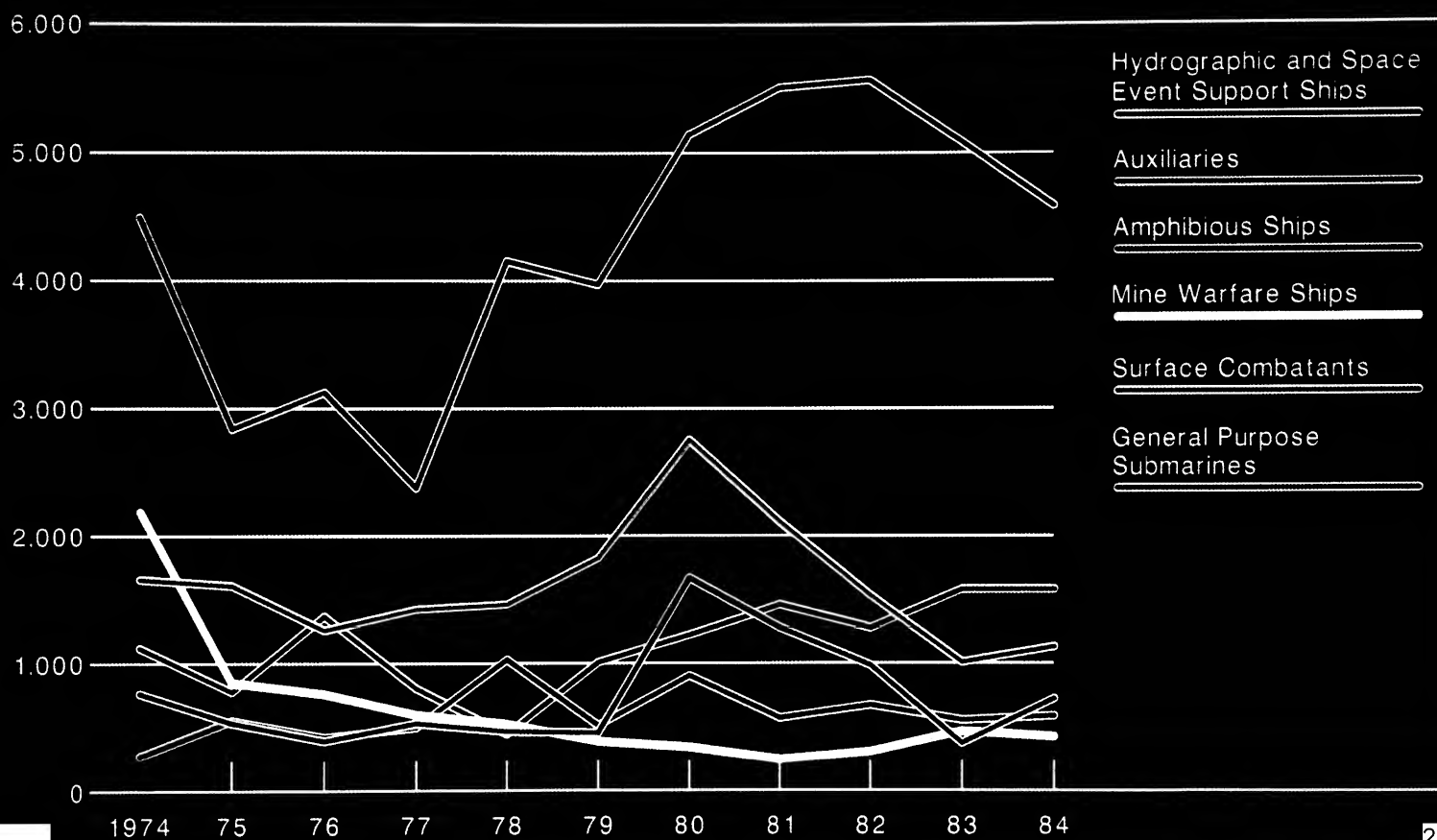
Soviet Ship-Days in the Pacific Ocean (Without the South China Sea), 1983 - 1984



Total Soviet Ship-Days in the Pacific Ocean and South China Sea, 1974 - 1984



Soviet Ship-Days in the Indian Ocean, 1974 - 1984



19. Two IL-38 ASW aircraft are continuously stationed at Al Anad Airfield, South Yemen, down from four routinely present before 1984. The Soviets have not sent IL-38s back to Asmera, Ethiopia since two aircraft routinely deployed there were damaged or destroyed by a rebel attack on the airfield in May 1984. [REDACTED]

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21. A combined Soviet-Ethiopian naval exercise was held for the first time in May 1984, and it may have included participation by the South Yemeni Navy. Several Soviet units, including an F-class diesel attack submarine and IL-38s from Ethiopian airfields, participated along with four Ethiopian ships. [REDACTED]

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22. The first deployment of a K-class diesel-powered torpedo attack submarine to the region occurred from July to October 1984. The two submarines present most often are one diesel--either F-class or K-class--and one nuclear-powered guided missile unit, either a C-class or Mod-E-II-class. More K-class patrols in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean can be expected as more units of this class enter the Pacific Fleet. [REDACTED]

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23. During August, a Soviet task force, which included the Moskva-class helicopter carrier Leningrad, two minesweepers, and additional combatants and auxiliaries arrived in response to the Red Sea mining incidents. Some mine hunting operations may have been carried out in South Yemeni waters and in the Red Sea, but overall the task group was generally inactive. Its main units departed through the Suez Canal in early November. The presence of the group helped boost the ship-day count for combatants and kept the ship-days total for mine warfare ships stable, although previously routine patrol operations by a Soviet mine warfare unit in the Strait of Hormuz were maintained only sporadically during the year. [REDACTED]

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27. No new Soviet naval use of facilities in the Seychelles has occurred despite Soviet donations of fuel oil and assistance in refurbishing and maintaining dilapidated fuel storage tanks. The number of Soviet port calls to Victoria was reduced in 1984. Nonetheless, President Rene's insecurity and ongoing Soviet efforts to play on his concerns may result in some privileges such as occasional landing rights for Soviet naval reconnaissance aircraft or occasional use of fuel storage tanks. [REDACTED]

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28. Several port calls to Mauritius were made in 1984, mainly by oceanographic research ships. Soviet relations with Madagascar soured in 1984 and early 1985. President Ratsiraka permitted US naval auxiliaries to make port calls in April 1984 and in March 1985 in order to provide humanitarian assistance after natural disasters but has since denied a Soviet request for a ship visit. [REDACTED]

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29. The Indian Ocean Squadron provides a small but visible threat to Western naval forces. The nuclear-powered cruise missile or torpedo attack submarine on patrol in the Arabian Sea serves as the main threat to the US carrier battle group there, short of a massive attack by long range aircraft from bases in the southern USSR. The diesel submarine in the region also provides a second threat to Western forces and shipping. The IL-38 aircraft in South Yemen support the submarines with reconnaissance against the carrier group or other targets and ASW screening missions to attempt to detect enemy

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submarines following the Soviet units. The Soviet surface combatants, auxiliaries, and amphibious ships would be of more limited use in the area during hostilities with the West. They could be withdrawn before hostilities or be sacrificed in support of submarine operations. The squadron lacks sustainability in wartime because Dahlak Island is lightly defended and without weapons storage facilities. The squadron could be reinforced with several submarines from Cam Ranh Bay, but this would only aggravate logistic weaknesses and divert resources from what might be the more critical campaign in the Pacific. The few Soviet submarines in the Indian Ocean could conduct operations of limited duration against sea lines of communication (SLOC).

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Atlantic/Caribbean

30. Two task groups transited the Atlantic Ocean to visit Cuba in 1984, instead of the usual one. A Soviet task group arrived in the Caribbean in March and consisted of the Moskva-class helicopter carrier Leningrad, an Udaloy-class destroyer, an F-class diesel-attack submarine, and a naval tanker. The Leningrad is the first helicopter carrier sent to Cuba by the Soviets, and the task group's arrival marked the first visit to the Caribbean by an Udaloy-class ship, the Soviet Navy's newest and most capable antisubmarine warship.

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31. The second group arrived in Cuba on 28 December 1984 for a stay of almost two months. The group was made up of a Sovremennyy-class guided missile destroyer, two frigates, a T-class diesel attack submarine, and an oiler. It represented the 24th Soviet deployment of a task group to Cuba since 1969 and marked the first deployment of a Sovremennyy-class ship to the region.

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Other highlights of the deployment included the transit through the Caribbean south of Jamaica--the first time the Soviets have ventured into those waters with surface combatants. Bear D reconnaissance and Bear F ASW aircraft continued to deploy to Cuba during the year.

32. The Soviets also continued their increased deployment of submarines off the US east coast. Beginning in December 1983, older E-II nuclear-powered cruise missile submarines (SSGns) engaged in patrols varying 30 to 60 days in length off the US.

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In January 1984, Delta-I and Delta-II SSBNs began patrolling closer to the US in areas previously associated with Yankee-I patrols. On 8 April 1984, the Soviets began more frequent patrols of Yankee-class SSBNs closer to the US.

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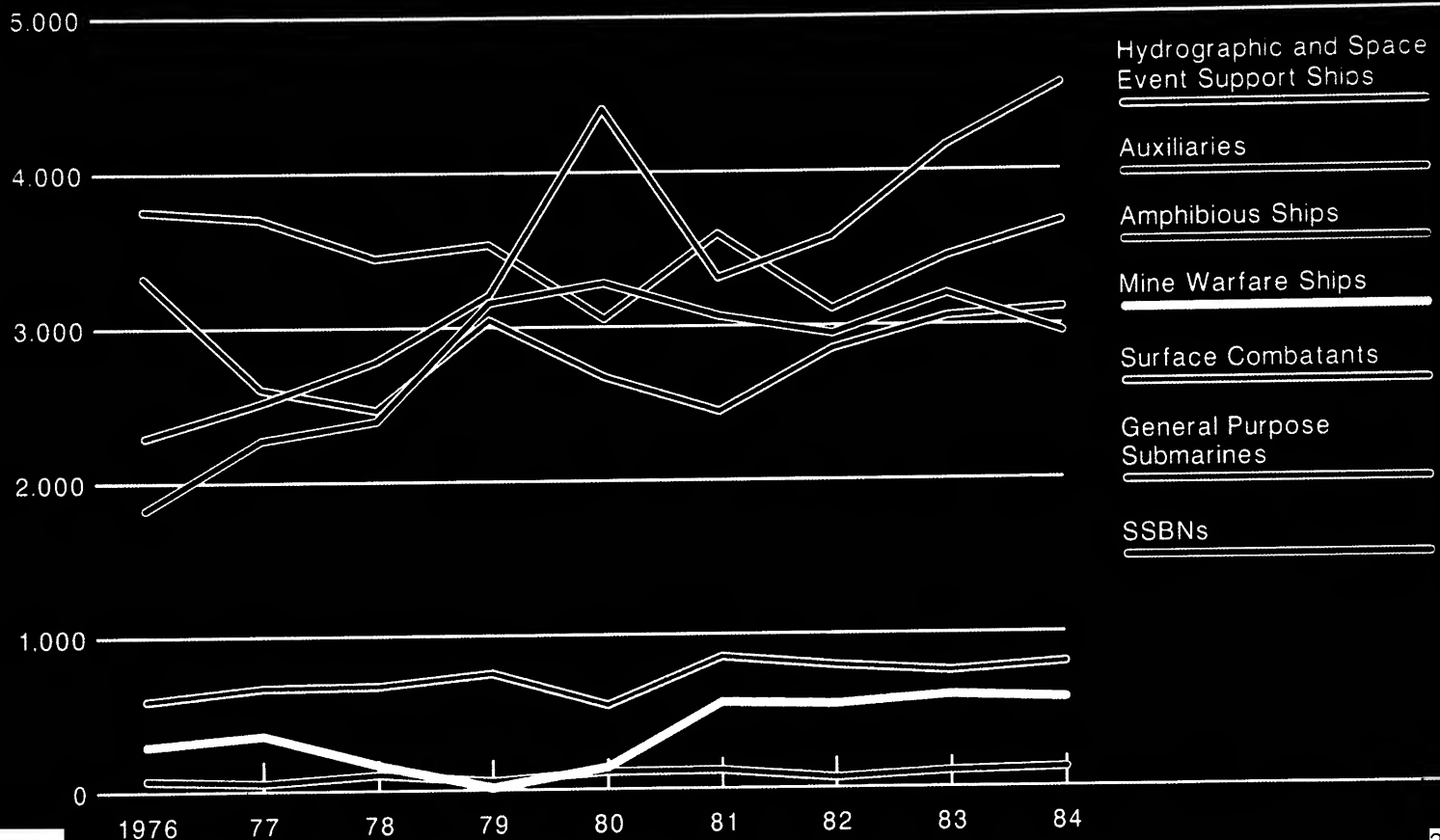
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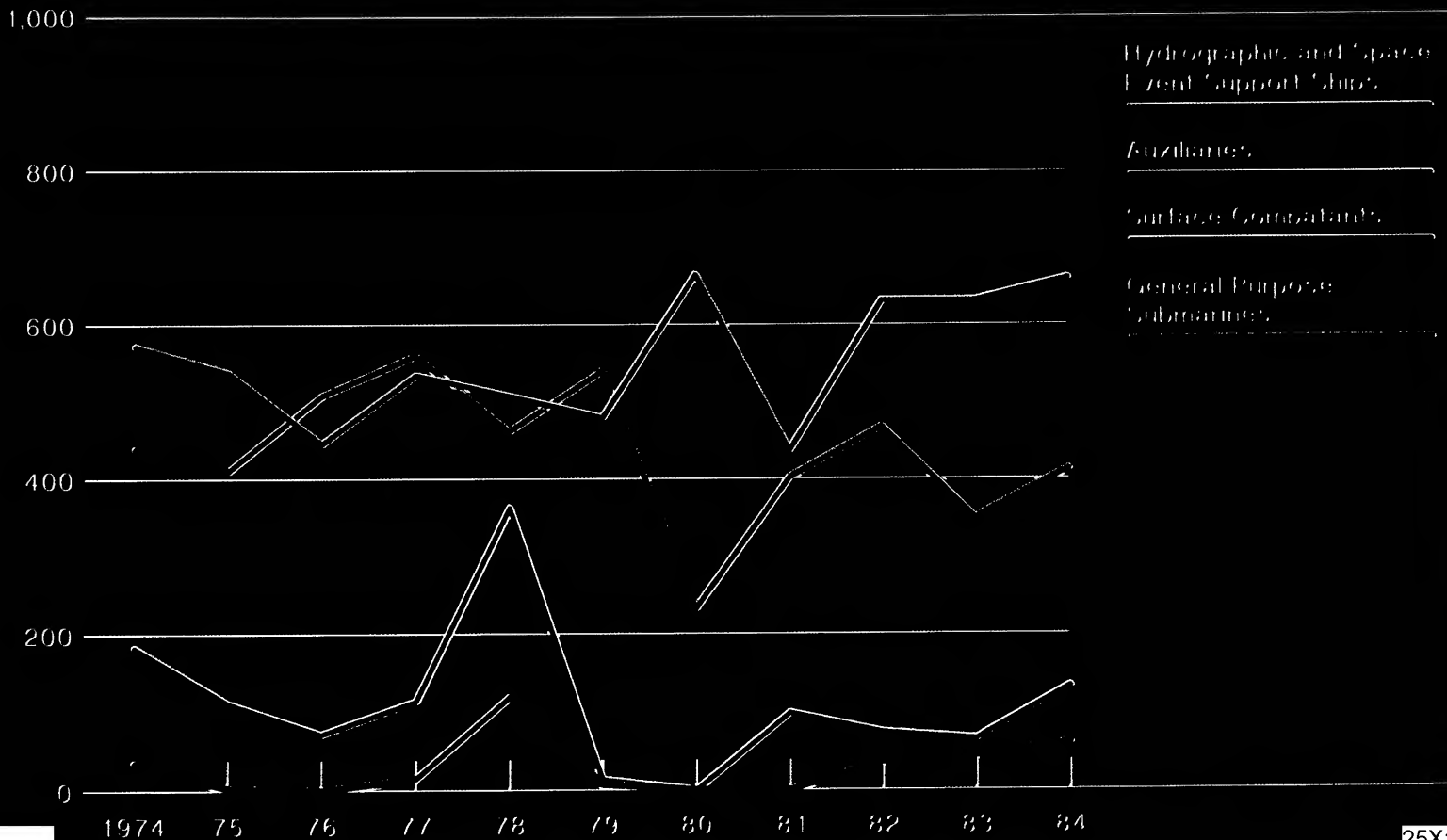
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Soviet Ship-Days in the Atlantic Ocean, 1976 - 1984



Soviet Ship-Days in the Caribbean Sea 1974 - 1984



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33. The primary advantage to the Soviets of these deployments is to reduce missile flight times. Submarines deployed in these areas, however, are more vulnerable to US ASW forces than they would be if they were operating in the bastions and continued deployments of this sort could cause difficulties in SSBN scheduling and maintenance. [REDACTED]

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34. The initial deployments may have been intended mainly for political rather than military reasons as a Soviet reaction to US missile deployments in Europe. Nonetheless, the presence of the E-II off the US coasts probably is a precursor of eventual routine deployment of Soviet land-attack cruise missiles--the SS-NX-21 and SS-NX-24--to waters near the US. [REDACTED]

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Mediterranean Sea

35. The Soviet Mediterranean Squadron has had a recognizable wartime mission against Western naval forces in the region since its inception. Force levels in the Squadron have not changed dramatically in recent years. In 1984, however, the ship-days of the Soviet Mediterranean Squadron fell by over 10 percent. This reduction probably is due to the cessation of unusual US military activity in the eastern Mediterranean, especially off Lebanon. The presence of amphibious ships--which doubled in 1983 with one Alligator or two Polnocnys kept at anchor in the eastern Mediterranean, probably for a contingency evacuation role--was sporadic in 1984. [REDACTED]

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36. The use of Libya and Syria for periodic deployment of ASW and reconnaissance aircraft has given the Soviets an improved monitoring capability in the eastern and central Mediterranean. Soviet access to these airfields during the opening stages of war would be a particularly valuable, although exposed, asset. Deployment of IL-38 ASW aircraft to Libya and Syria became more routine in 1984--four deployments to Libya and four to Syria during the year. [REDACTED]

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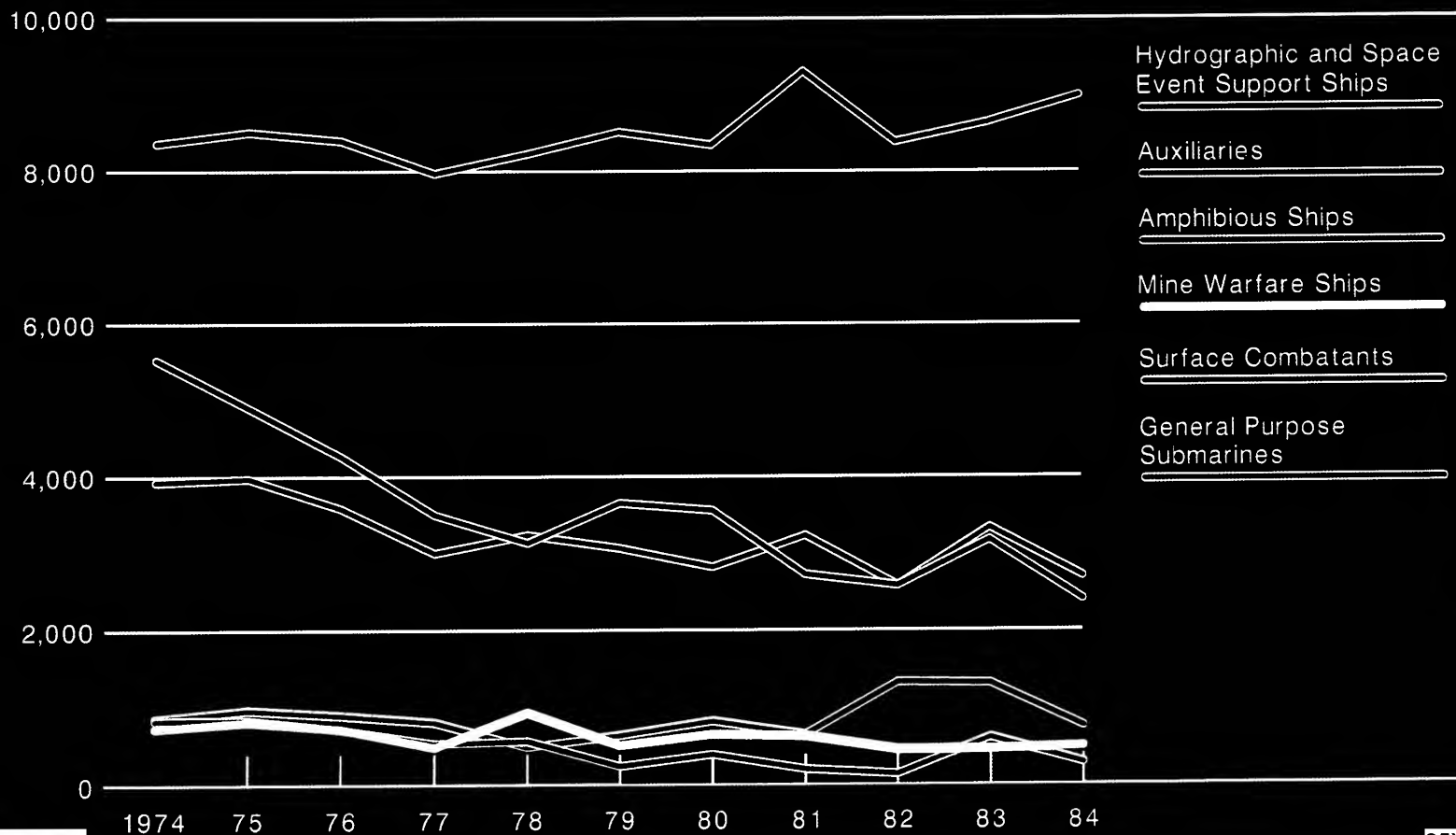
37. The Soviets continue to use ports in Syria, Libya, and occasionally Algeria and Tunisia for limited repair and maintenance of combatants in the Mediterranean. Tunisia granted access for a Soviet F-class submarine in August after denying Soviet requests since they were last given docking privileges in the late 1970s. Maintenance work for Soviet units in regional ports and shipyards provides valuable support for the Mediterranean Squadron as well as providing some alternatives to using overcrowded shipyards in the USSR. [REDACTED]

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Soviet Ship-Days in the Mediterranean Sea 1974 - 1984



West Africa

38. There was little change in the size of the Soviet naval patrol off West Africa in 1984. A diesel attack submarine was present in the region for more than half the year--up from the two-month submarine deployment there in 1983. A surface combatant and/or an amphibious ship remained present in Luanda throughout the year, supported by auxiliaries and Soviet naval technicians ashore. The Soviet fisheries protection patrol of one or two minesweepers continued to operate out of Conakry, Guinea. [REDACTED]

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39. The amount of time spent by TU-95 Bear D naval reconnaissance aircraft in Angola increased in 1984. They maintained the usual low level of activity while deployed, however, and at least some of the increase in time was due to mechanical problems and bad weather delaying scheduled returns to Cuba. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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41. The Soviet naval presence off West Africa normally does not present a credible threat to the West in the event of war. Bear D reconnaissance aircraft deployed to Luanda in wartime would be unable to reach the major cross-Atlantic sealanes to be used by US forces and shipping. If a diesel-powered attack submarine was deployed to the region and remained during hostilities, it could conduct limited anti-SLOC missions against merchant shipping, although it would lack adequate logistic support and ordnance reloads. [REDACTED]

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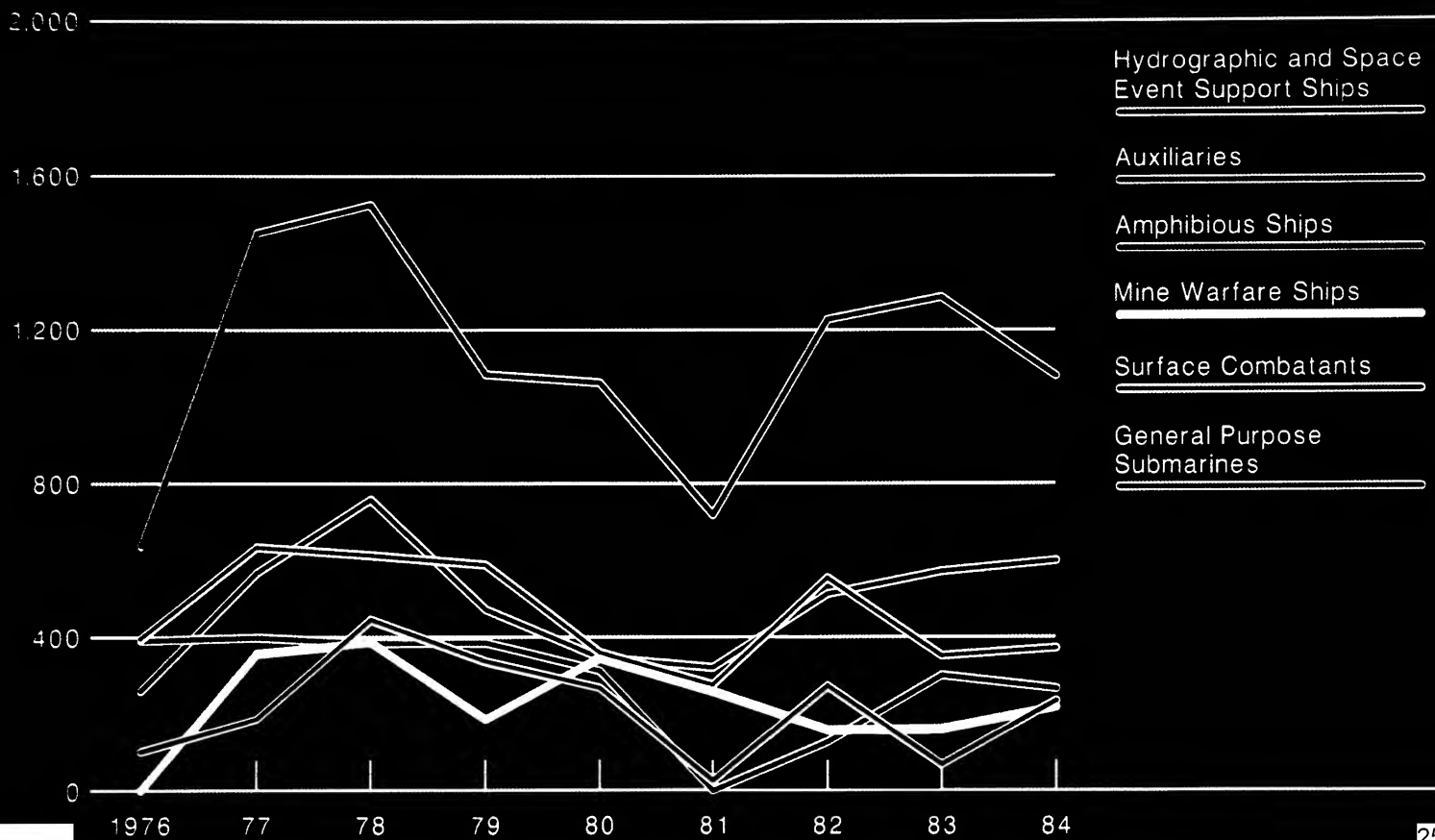
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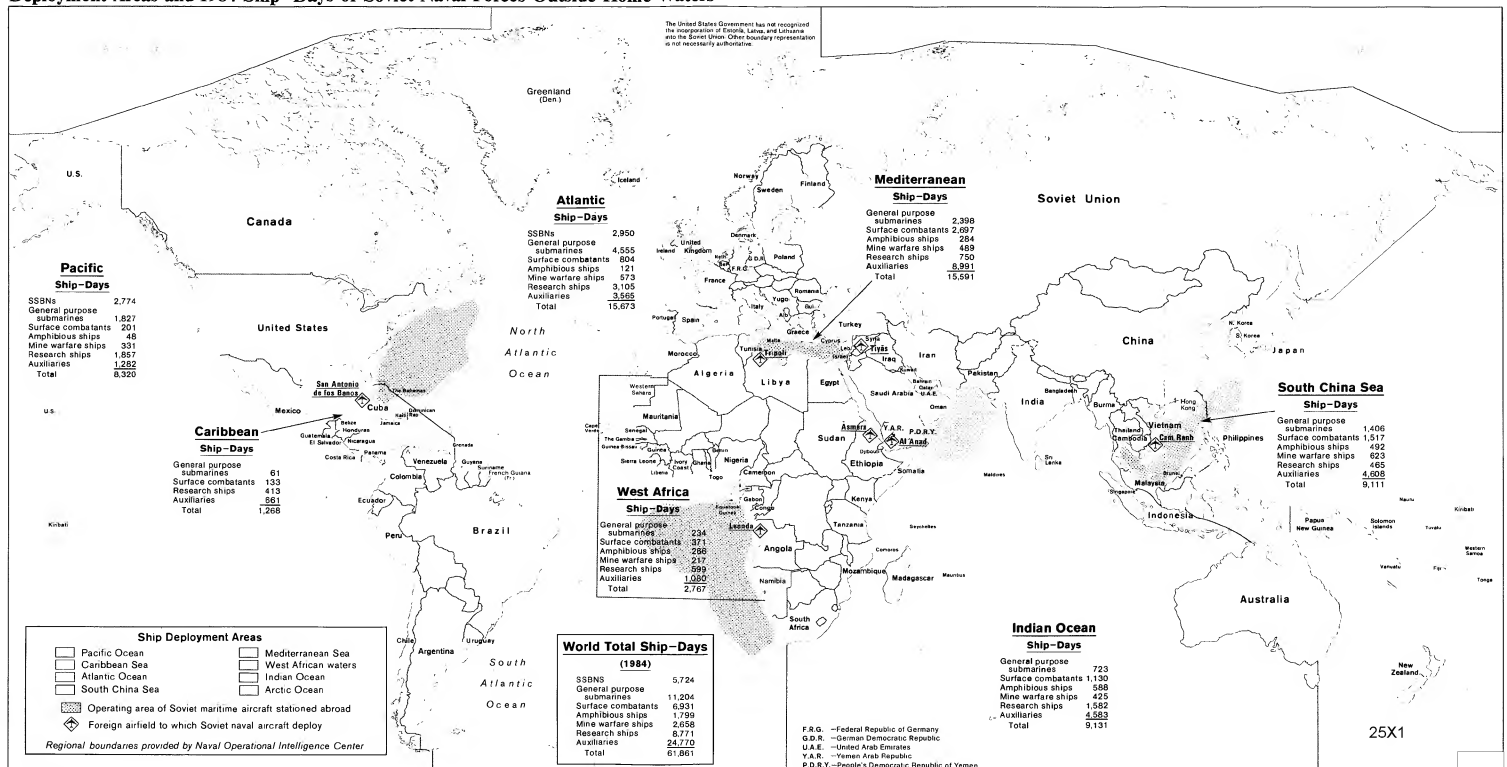
Soviet Ship-Days Off West Africa 1976 - 1984



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Deployment Areas and 1984 Ship-Days of Soviet Naval Forces Outside Home Waters

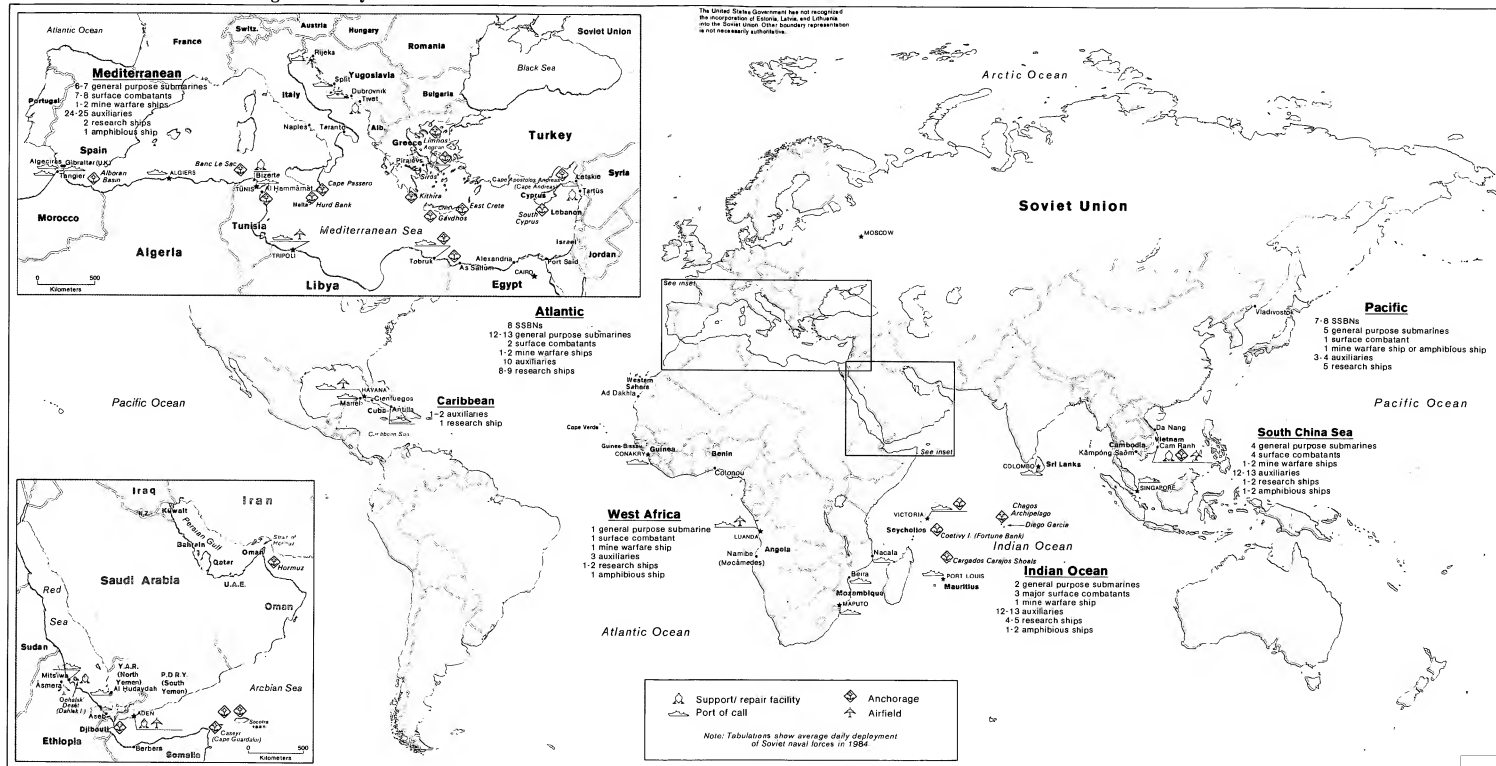


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Overseas Facilities and Anchorages Used by Soviet Naval Forces



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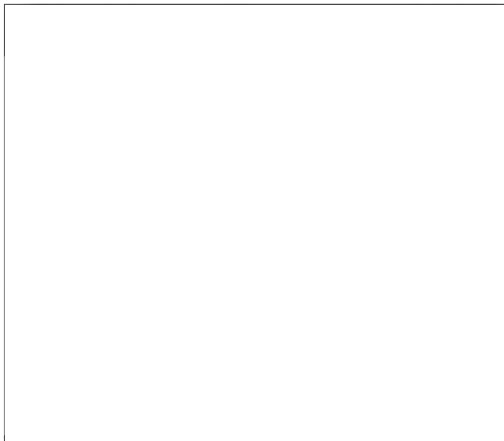
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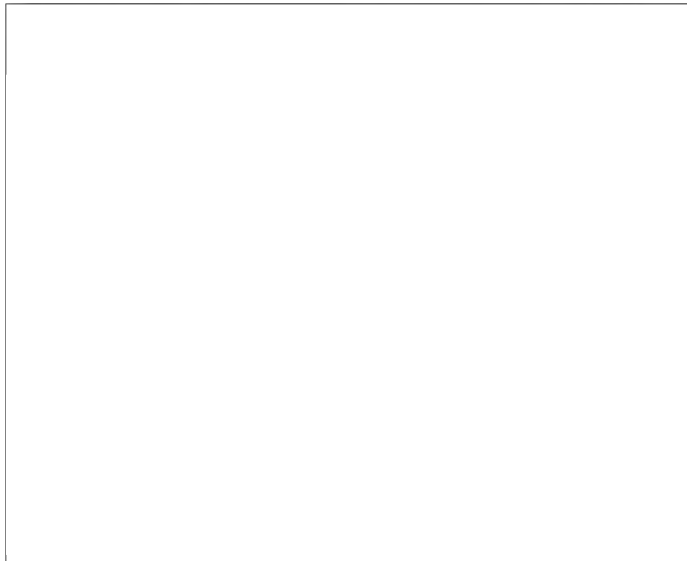
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